

Please amend the application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

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Please cancel Claims 11 - 16, 21, and 25-29 without prejudice. Please amend Claim 17 as follows.

*1 - 16. (Cancelled)*

17. (Currently Amended) A variable axis immersion lens assembly for use with a charged particle beam comprising:

a deflection coil located coaxial to the beam, which deflection coil is used to shift the axis of the ~~electron beam~~ charged particle beam;

an excitation coil located coaxial to the deflection coil;

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a first pole piece located coaxial to the excitation coil, the first pole piece extending at least partly around the excitation coil;

a magnetic field shield located coaxial to and downstream with regard to propagation of the beam from the deflection coil;

a support for a target of the charged particle beam and downstream with regard to propagation of the beam from the magnetic field shield, wherein the magnetic field shield is located intermediate the deflection coil and the support, and such that an upper surface of the magnetic field shield is at least approximately parallel to a magnetic equipotential surface of a focusing magnetic field within the immersion lense, thereby limiting a magnetic field generated by the deflection coil from radiating downstream into areas protected by the magnetic field shield.

18. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 17, wherein the first pole piece is of iron.

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19. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 17, further comprising a second pole piece located coaxial to the deflection coil, the second pole piece extending at least partly around the deflection coil.

20. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 19, wherein the second pole piece is of ferrite.

21. (Cancelled)

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22. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 17, wherein the magnetic field shield is of ferrite.

23. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 17, further comprising a detector located intermediate the magnetic field shield and the support for the target.

24. (Original) The immersion lens assembly of Claim 17, wherein the support for the target is of non-magnetic and electrically conductive material.

25 - 29. (Cancelled)